Fort Sam Houston
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO
NewsLeader
U.S.ARMY
FORT SAM HOUSTON TEXAS

Issue: July 211, 2011

A bright, green future for JBSA, San Antonio focus of sustainable energy workshop

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Partnerships, innovation and efficiency were featured topics during the Joint Base San Antonio Sustainable Energy Workshop 2011, hosted by the Defense Transformation Institute in collaboration with the 502nd Air Base Wing, July 12 at the Pearl Stable in San Antonio.

Presentations by Air Force Brig. Gen. Leonard Patrick, commander, 502nd Air Base Wing, and Doyle Beneby, president and chief executive officer of CPS Energy, highlighted the affiliation between JBSA and CPS Energy with the goals of reducing energy consumption while increasing reliance on renewable resources.

Patrick said that a major factor in creating a sustainable military installation – new construction under the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure law – is done with energy conservation in mind.

“Every facility that we’re building on Fort Sam Houston, Lackland Air Force Base and Randolph is at least LEED certifiable Silver,” he said.

The LEED certification system, developed and administered by the U.S. Green Building Council, a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit, offers four levels for new construction projects: Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

Each level corresponds to credits accrued in five “green design” categories such as sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources and indoor environmental quality as measured by third party.

The idea behind LEED certification is to provide better ventilation, manage indoor energy consumption through temperature and lighting control, while also reducing indoor air pollution.

Building green is only half of the equation Patrick said. People are the ultimate solution to a sustainable future.

“It’s a holistic approach. We can do that by creating a culture that understands how to conserve and look for ways to do it,” Patrick explained, adding that every Airman, Soldier, Sailor and Marine is responsible, and that it is working at JBSA.

“When you look at the amount of water consumption our installations have used over the last couple of years, as opposed to the executive order, it was going in the wrong direction. We turned the corner this year – in a drought,” Patrick said.

If you look at the amount of electrical reduction we’re supposed to have, on intensity with the number of buildings we’ve torn down and square footage, we’ve turned the corner,” Patrick said, “but we’ve got to be better.”

The general explained that using smart technology to monitor and control water and electrical systems and usage was the right approach to further reduce usage and provide troubleshoot tools.

“I don’t want to lose millions of gallons of potable water down the storm sewer because I have a water break and don’t know about it.” Patrick said that situation occurred at Randolph while he served as the base engineer.

“Why do we force the human to do something technology can do for us?” Patrick asked workshop attendees. “Hooking up facilities to monitor and control systems so that at night, if a set point is wrong, it can be remotely changed,” Patrick emphasized.

Last year Patrick and his teams crafted a strategic energy management plan and he challenged to area businesses to collaborate.

CPS Energy stepped up to the plate providing rebates that allowed JBSA to embark upon sustainable energy projects such as the smart technology in several buildings on Fort Sam Houston. With smart technology, lights extinguish when people leave a room or with inactivity.

“We’re in a very aggressive course to change our fleet and transform San Antonio in a way that creates economic development opportunities and educational opportunities,” Doyle said, with the goal to make San Antonio the hub of the new energy economy through partnerships with the military and with business.

Military installations focused on using sustainable energy have national security implications,” Doyle explained.

“We want to be good neighbors to the city, protect our energy resources for our future generations,” Patrick said. “It’s about being energy independent from the rest of the world.”